

NORTH CAROLINA PRAMS FACT SHEET

April 2011



N.C. African American Maternal Health

2006–2008 N.C. Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

North Carolina is one of ten states with the largest African American populations.¹ According to 2009 estimates, North Carolina's resident African American population was 2,027,942; representing approximately 22 percent of the state's population.² Forty-five percent of the African American population falls in the childbearing ages of 15 to 44, compared to 39 percent of white residents of the state. The overall birth rate per 1,000 for African American mothers ages 15–44 in North Carolina in 2009 was 63.4, compared to a rate of 66.5 for white mothers. In this report, we examine North Carolina Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data from 2006–2008 to better understand the maternal health of African American mothers in the state.

Prenatal Care

Timing

Early prenatal care helps identify conditions and behavior that may result in poor birth outcomes, such as prematurity or low birth weight. Babies born to mothers who received no prenatal care are more likely to be born at low birth weight than those whose mothers received prenatal care.³ As shown in Figure 1, African American mothers (63%) are significantly less likely to report that they began prenatal care in the first trimester compared to white mothers (79%). African American mothers were significantly more likely to report that they did not receive prenatal care as early as they would have liked (27%) compared to white mothers (17%).

Barriers

Obstacles to prenatal care may keep women from accessing care as early and as often as they would like during pregnancy. Overall, 40 percent of mothers regardless of race or ethnicity reported at least one barrier to obtaining

prenatal care. African American mothers were significantly more likely to report experiencing at least one prenatal care barrier compared to white mothers (48% vs. 37%).

A variety of barriers to prenatal care were reported by African American mothers. Approximately one in five African American women reported not being able to get an appointment for prenatal care visits. One in every six African American women reported that they could not start care as early as they wished due to lack of money or insurance, or because they did not have a Medicaid card. About 11 percent of African American women did not seek prenatal care because they wanted to keep their pregnancy a secret.

Provider

The majority of African American women (60%) reported that they went to a private doctor or HMO clinic for prenatal care. About 22 percent of African American women reported that they received prenatal care from a health department clinic

Figure 1
Percentage of New Mothers Reporting That They Received Prenatal Care
in the First Trimester of Pregnancy, NC PRAMS 2006–2008

